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All for One? The Dynamics of Intermunicipal Cooperation in Regional Marketing Partnerships

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Abstract: In this complex and highly interconnected world, one government rarely possesses full capability in any given policy area. It is therefore vital to understand how governments can work together to achieve collective goals. This paper examines how horizontal cooperation between local governments emerges in metropolitan regions. It tests a theoretical framework that unites the two dominant, but so far isolated, approaches to regional governance and cooperation in four cases: the Toronto and Waterloo city-regions in Canada, and the Frankfurt and Rhein-Neckar regions in Germany. Findings demonstrate the inconsistency of the systemic and intervening factors that anchor the two dominant approaches and propose an alternative approach – civic capital – to explain observed patterns of cooperation. Finally, the paper reflects on the theoretical and policy implications of these findings for research in comparative politics and regional governance.

Keywords: regional governance, intermunicipal cooperation, civic capital, regional development, regional marketing.

In this complex and highly interconnected world, one government rarely possesses full capability in any given policy area. Nowhere is this more of a challenge than for local governments. They are subject to the outcomes of policies formulated by senior levels of government, to global forces, and their fortunes and opportunities are affected by decisions and actions of neighboring municipalities over which they have little control. One option open to municipalities in metropolitan regionsⁱ facing these realities is to engage in interlocal cooperation. Coordinating and cooperating with neighboring local governments can mitigate interjurisdictional spillovers and help create economies of scale (Feoick, 2007). Establishing a vision and policies at the metropolitan level can increase competitiveness relative to other metropolitan jurisdictions (Pierce, 1993) and foster a critical mass of political capital with which to influence policy at senior levels of government. One of the advantages of a cooperative approach is that it can be as informal or institutionalized as the partners wish and is suited to a wide variety of issue areas (see Nelles, 2009a). While intermunicipal cooperation is not appropriate to every situation it is an attractive alternative to regional reform and is frequently adopted in city-regions as a mechanism of policy coordination in the context of governmental fragmentation (Andrew, 2009; Hulst and van Montfort, 2007). As a result the questions of how intermunicipal partnerships emerge and which conditions encourage or hinder cooperation in city-regions are of increasing interest to scholars and policymakers alike.

This paper investigates not only the factors that affect the evolution of intermunicipal relationships, but also the strength of the resulting partnerships. In sum, it considers the extent to which actors within a regional partnership are indeed “all for one”. It investigates these core questions through a qualitative comparative analysis of regional marketing alliances in four city-regions in two countries - the Toronto and Waterloo regions in Canada, and Frankfurt Rhein-

Main and the Rhein Neckar regions in Germany. These cases are analyzed using a unique theoretical framework that combines elements of governance and interjurisdictional agreement (IJA) approaches, the two dominant literatures that treat cooperative dynamics in metropolitan regions. The results of the comparative analysis show that the systemic and intervening variables considered by the governance and IJA approaches have different effects on, and can act in different directions (positive or negative) relative to the intensity of cooperative relationships across cases. This suggests that while these approaches can provide valuable insights into how and why cooperation emerges in specific cases, they are not generalizable.

As an alternative explanation for the patterns observed in these cases this paper introduces the concept of civic capital. This approach contends that the greater the presence of civic networks at the regional scale the more likely that cooperation between municipal governments will emerge and become institutionalized. This study and its findings make both theoretical and empirical contributions to the field of comparative politics. One aim of this paper is to address the gap Pierre (2005) noted in the lack of comparative research in the areas of urban and regional governance by employing a wide range of qualitative comparative techniques in theory building and analysis. Additionally, this theoretical framework unites two previously isolated approaches and highlights important lessons for regional governance in practice, but it also contributes to scholarship on intergovernmental and interorganizational relations more broadly by confirming the importance of the role of networks in establishing partnerships. The conclusion reflects further on the theoretical and policy implications of the findings of this paper. The following section outlines the theoretical framework and summarizes the methodological approach before applying them in the analysis of the four case studies. The concept of civic capital is then

introduced in an attempt to account for observed patterns the systemic and intervening elements of the combined theoretical framework are unable to explain.

Regional Governance and Interjurisdictional Negotiations: Uniting Two Approaches

The issues raised by the absence of formal and functionally inclusive city-region government to coordinate action beyond the boundaries of municipal authorities has been considered in the context of a wide range of major metropolitan problems (see, for example, Altschuler et al. 1999; Barnes and Ledebur, 1998; Frug and Barron, 2008; Pastor et al. 2000; Swanstrom, 2001). City-regional governance can be structured in numerous ways, but cooperation of some form between local political authorities is at the heart of every regionally-developed governance arrangement. Consequently, any analysis of governance capacity at the city-region scale requires an understanding of the dynamics of intermunicipal collaborative relationships and their commitment to regional collective action. Cooperation is here defined as the "voluntary association of governmental and non-governmental organizations in a defined geographic area for the purpose of controlling or regulating behaviour within and performing functions or providing services for the overall territory" (Norris, 2001, 535). Given the importance of the concept of cooperation to regional governance arguments it is puzzling that only very few studies in this area engage with the literature and theoretical approaches that deal with the dynamics of interjurisdictional contracting and partnership.

Contemporary literature on interjurisdictional cooperation is a variant of the rational choice approach and concentrates largely on the North American context (see Feiock, 2007; Feiock, 2004; Oakerson; Post, 2004; 2004; Steinacker, 2004). This perspective focuses on the factors that shape the actions of individual decision makers and has tended to concentrate on single case studies of bilateral intermunicipal partnerships for service delivery. In attempting to understand

cooperative outcomes they concentrate on the factors that affect the actions of decision makers faced with the opportunity or desire to engage in intermunicipal cooperation. As a result they emphasize transaction costs as barriers to cooperation (Andrew, 2009; Hawkins, 2009; Schneider and Teske, 1992), which is inherently tied to the *characteristics of the collective good* that partnership will provide. The variables typically considered by these approaches relate to the costs and benefits of cooperation. Transaction costs encompass information and coordination costs, negotiation and division costs (including potential for joint benefits), enforcement and monitoring costs, and agency or political costs (Feoick, 2007). Other variables that affect decisions to enter into cooperative relationships, drawing on Olson (1965) include the presence or absence of coercion or selective incentives, and the number of actors involved in the partnership. Asymmetry of power between actors and asset specificity are also frequently considered in these approaches (Post, 2004; Steinacker, 2004).

The regional governance literature, by contrast, centers predominantly on the forms and politics of regional partnerships in Europe. This scholarship is generally more comparative and focuses on broader governance arrangements across city-regions (Hulst and van Montfort, 2007) often in the context of analyzing the evolution of specific projects (see Otgaar et al. 2008 and Salet and Gualini, 2007), or the impact of institutional environments (Frug, 1999; Frug and Barron, 2008; Lambregts et al. 2008). Some of the factors cited by this literature include the power and autonomy of political leaders, availability and distribution of local resources and financial autonomy (Hulst and van Montfort, 2007; Lefevre, 2004; Norris, 2001), the influence of political parties (Fedele and Moini, 2007), preexisting governance structures (Fürst, 2006; Hulst and van Montfort, 2007), and the influence of legislation made by higher levels of government, particularly in the EU context (Otgaar et al. 2008).

These two dominant streams of literature are broadly concerned with understanding the processes and dynamics of horizontal relationships between local governments yet rarely engage with one another. In some cases they even use similar variables – for instance, the influence of the distribution and number of actors involved in partnerships is considered by both approaches – but their methods and analysis rarely overlap. This may be a matter of perspective. Governance approaches focus largely on institutional influences where rational choice perspectives tend to focus on factors related to the characteristics of an issue (such as the opportunity cost of investment, or asset specificity). Because of this conceptual difference these two approaches have the potential to contribute to and complement one another. Christopherson (2010) makes a similar point about the gulf between European and American approaches to local and regional economic development literature. This paper highlights the commonalities between the two dominant approaches to intermunicipal policy coordination and reimagines a theoretical framework that combines elements of each in order to capture the best of both analytical worlds.

Class	Framework Variable	Definition	Components
Systemic	# of Actors	The more actors involved in negotiations the more difficult it may be to establish cooperation – more actors can drive up transaction costs.	<i>Group size</i> (Olson, 1965; Lefevre, 1998); <i>Transaction costs</i> (Feiock, 2007; Andrew, 2009; Hawkins, 2009)
	Executive Autonomy	The greater the power and autonomy of executive actors the greater freedom for political entrepreneurship and potential for cooperation. [Greater autonomy can also block cooperative efforts]	<i>Power off/(institutional) constraints on political leaders</i> (Schneider & Teske, 1992; Elkins, 1995; Miller, 2000; Clingermeier & Feiock, 2001; Reese & Rosenfeld, 2002; Steinacker, 2004; Kruegar & McGuire, 2005; Feiock, 2007); <i>Personality of political leaders</i> (John & Cole, 2000; Getimis & Grigoriadou, 2005; Plamper, 2007); <i>Election cycles</i> (Feiock, 2007)
	Institutional Autonomy	The more access to financing and autonomy over local policy the more likely local actors will be willing to sacrifice resources and/or decision making authority to partnerships.	<i>Local discretion/ distribution of resources</i> (Basolo, 2003; Vetter & Kersting, 2003; Shresthra, 2005; Hulst & van Montfort, 2007; Otgaar et. al., 2008) <i>Functional responsibility/decentralization of power</i> (Frug, 1999, 2002; Norris, 2001; Basolo, 2003; Lefevre, 2004; Otgaar et. al., 2008); <i>Potential for joint gains</i> (Steinacker, 2004; Post, 2004)
	Party Politics	Broader party structures may provide a scaffold for the construction of cooperative solutions.	<i>Local congruence</i> (Fedele & Moini, 2007; Hulst & van Montfort, 2007; Nelles, 2009); <i>Upper level parties</i> (Keating, 2003)
	Power Asymmetry	Asymmetrical power relationships may have positive or negative effects on cooperation depending on coercion vs. potential for joint gains.	<i>Coercion/Potential for joint gains</i> (Olson, 1965; Post, 2004; Steinacker, 2004); <i>Structural/polycentricity</i> (Lefevre, 1998; Herrschel & Newman, 2002; Lambregts, 2006; Hall, 2006; Hovler, et. al. 2006; Ostrom, 2010); <i>Transaction costs</i> (Feiock, 2007, Andrew, 2009; Hawkins, 2009)
	Previous Structures	The presence of other regionally oriented governance structures may encourage local actors to cooperate in new partnerships.	Lefevre, 1998, Fürst, 2005; Nelles, 2009; LeRoux et. al., 2010
Intervening	Government Intervention	The intervention of senior levels of government in providing incentives or passing legislation can directly (and indirectly) encourage local actors to cooperate.	Coercion/Selective incentives (Olson, 1965; Otgaar et. al., 2008; Hulst & van Montfort, 2007)
	Shocks	Shocks and externally-generated crisis may bring previously non-cooperative actors together to address collective issues.	Steiner, 2003; Hawkins, 2009

Table 1: Theoretical framework variables, definitions and selected components

This theoretical framework is outlined in Table 1. In the table each framework variable is defined and examples of the components drawn from the two literature and their attributions are listed for each one. In this interpretation a wide range of influences are (re)classified into two broader groups of variables. Systemic variables shape the environment in which decision-makers operate. These are factors consist principally of the broader institutions that form the rules of the game. While these can certainly change over time they are distinctive from the intervening variable class to the extent that they are relatively predictable and stable over time. Intervening variables, by contrast, are episodic in nature and difficult to foresee. These also shape the decision-making environment of local actors often by altering the stakes of the game and therefore shifting incentives. It is interesting to note that even at this level of theoretical abstraction *the direction of influence* – positive or negative – on cooperation cannot necessarily be predicted. In other words, for almost all of the framework variables it is possible to imagine positive or negative outcomes.

The example of institutional autonomy illustrates this ambiguity. The more access to revenue sources or funding tools the more likely a municipality may be willing to commit to cooperation. In this case, the ability to raise or repurpose funds may give them the flexibility and inclination to devote resources to a collective rather than competitive venture. However, municipalities with greater access to resources may also face lower incentives to collaborate. Conceivably, if they have the revenue generating capacity to engage in collaboration they have the potential to generate the resources necessary to go it alone and maintain autonomy over decision-making in the target policy area. What kind of effect, if any, this variable has on cooperation will depend on other contextual factors, including the effect of other framework variables. There can be no doubt that understanding the influence of systemic and intervening factors is essential to understanding the emergence and character of partnerships in city-regions.

But even at the outset the difficulty of developing a hypothesis about cooperative dynamics in a given case from this theoretical framework alone is evident. This paper uses the four empirical cases to test this hypothesis and to explore an alternative approach in the concept of civic capital.

All for One (Sometimes): Empirical Findings

Regional marketing partnerships are one of the most common forms of intermunicipal cooperation. The capital costs of setting up and maintaining these types of partnerships are relatively low and the benefit of regional collaboration in this area is fairly easy for local actors to accept (see Nunn and Rosentraub, 1997). Additionally, while participation requires cooperation to attract investment to and to promote the region, these types of associations do not preclude competitive behaviour between actors once investors have decided to locate there. In short, regional marketing as an issue area presents relatively low barriers to cooperation. The broader empirical project from which these cases are drawn includes cases with much higher issue-related barriers to cooperation such as regional cultural policy and regional transportation, but these are omitted in this analysis due to space constraints (see Nelles, 2009a; Nelles, 2009b; Nelles, 2010).

The four city- regions in two different countries were selected for variation in their institutional contexts and similarity in size and economic composition to enable cross-national comparison. The two large city-regions – Toronto and Frankfurt – have regional populations of over 3.5 million and similar economic functions as central nodes of trade, manufacturing, and international finance within their countries. The smaller regions – the Rhein-Neckar and Waterloo regions – are both manufacturing and knowledge hubs with comparable regional geographies in terms of the polycentric distribution of the core municipalities and of their

economic functions relative to the two larger city-regions in this study. These cases, therefore, allow for both internal and cross-national controls.

In each case the character and evolution of the regional marketing partnerships was analyzed using the theoretical framework described above. The character and strength of cooperation was assessed using a combination of scope of participation and institutionalization measures alongside practical evidence of commitment to the partnership.ⁱⁱ There is considerable variation between cases in the strength of cooperative relationships, in the extent to which the partners are genuinely “all for one”.

Cooperation in practice

The Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance (GTMA) is one of the weakest partnerships in this sample. It was established in 1997 as a public-private partnership between 29 municipalities and regional governments in the Toronto region. The GTMA was conceived to promote the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) internationally and to act as a central regional portal for site selection information, and advice on provincial and Canadian regulation, and to help establish international partnerships. While participation is broad and institutionalization is relatively strong, attitudes about the effectiveness of the partnership are strikingly negative. As one observer remarked: “The GTMA has the right mandate, but people question what it is delivering” (confidential interview, August 2007). Another stated that “no one in Toronto thought that the GTMA would make a difference. It’s about getting along and maintaining appearances” (confidential interview, September 2007). These cynical attitudes towards the partnership are echoed in the actions of member municipalities. Despite supporting the GTMA financially several mayors and delegations from member municipalities have participated in solo trade missions over the past two years, and GTMA functions are consistently duplicated at the

local level (Spears, 2008). Local actors acknowledge the importance of cooperation in the area of regional marketing but to the degree that the partnership, as structured, is not effectively serving this need parochial behaviors may be reasserting themselves.

The marketing partnership in Frankfurt is even weaker than the GTMA due to lower participation, weaker institutionalization, and similarly cynical attitudes about its effectiveness. FrankfurtRheinMain GmbH “International Marketing of the Region” (FRM GmbH) was founded in March 2005 to fulfill a mandate of the state legislation requiring cooperation across the planning region in marketing, culture and several other areas. It developed into a partnership between 22 towns, districts, and communities within, and extending slightly beyond the boundaries of the central core of the city-region. As in the Toronto case the actions of partner municipalities, however, indicate a relatively weak cooperative commitment to the association. Many of the municipal actors still maintain their own economic development and marketing offices. Consequently, there is still a degree of competitiveness between municipalities within the region as to where potential leads generated by the regional association should be situated.

The two cases stand in marked contrast to the experience of the Waterloo and Rhein-Neckar regions. Waterloo’s regional marketing association – Canada’s Technology Triangle Inc. (CTT Inc.) – enjoys broad participation, is strongly institutionalized, and is widely regarded as one of the keystone organizations of the region. It was founded in 1987 by the economic development officials of the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and neighbouring Guelph to coordinate marketing activities. While actors in the region sometimes question the effectiveness of CTT Inc. as a marketing association, there is a widespread recognition and support for its role as a leader in regional development efforts. As one official noted: “[CTT Inc.]

is the economic development arm that represents all of us when they're looking to bring companies in and when they get here the individual municipality works with the businesses in their own area is how we divvy it up, but there's *certainly is a lot of cooperation between the municipalities, certainly on the economic development front. Because the reality is our economies are completely intertwined*" (confidential interview, March 2009). There is rarely any duplication of international promotion efforts at the local level.

There is a similar level of support for the regional marketing association in the Rhein-Neckar region. The current regional marketing association, the Metropolregion Rhein-Neckar GmbH (MRN GmbH), was founded in 2006 and is the legal successor of a previous partnership established in 2000. The MRN GmbH significantly expanded both the membership and the mandate of the previous partnership. In addition to being the international marketing and branding association for the region, it has also been described as the spokes-organization for the Metropolregion Rhein-Neckar (confidential interview, February 2007) and as a key player in the governance structure that deals with regional planning and development. The association itself is broadly supported by its membership and is the most highly institutionalized of all four cases. The following statement sums up how local development officials see the partnership: "If there are several appropriate sites in different cities then there is competition, sure. But normally everyone understands that even if one city loses, *the region always wins*" (confidential interview, translated from German, January 2007).

These cases illustrate the very different experiences that city-regions can have in establishing and sustaining regional cooperation. Marketing partnerships were weakest in the two largest regions, and markedly stronger in the smaller ones. The most obvious conclusion is that differences in

cooperative intensities are related to differences in city-region sizes and the number of actors involved in the partnerships. True enough, Frankfurt and Toronto are the largest city-regions by population. However, they are not both the largest by *number of actors*. Per Olson (1965) smaller groups are more likely than larger ones to spontaneously cooperate. By extension, regional cooperation as a form of collective action is *ceteris paribus* more likely to occur in regions with fewer actors. However, the results of this analysis are not consistent with that position. Both German city-regions dwarf the Canadian ones in terms of number of governments within the city-region: Frankfurt comprises 445 and Rhein-Neckar has 282 communities, municipalities and counties. Toronto and Waterloo, by contrast, count 29 and 8 cities and communities, respectively. By this logic, cooperation should be much easier to achieve in Canada. Clearly, there are other factors at play.

Uncovering cooperative influences

As expected, the elements of the theoretical framework have variable influences on cooperation in each case. Factors that have positive influences in one case have negative influences in others. Some have no impact at all. The influence and direction of impact of each variable is summarized in Table 2 where a (-) indicates a barrier to cooperative behavior and a (+) indicates a positive impact. Zeros symbolize no or negligible impact and in some cases, such as party politics where there are no political parties at the local level in the Canadian cases, variables are not applicable (n.a.). What this table demonstrates most effectively is the striking lack of patterns. Cases in which cooperation was easier to establish share little in common, such that it is impossible to pick out which factors contributed most significantly to their cooperative ‘success’. Similarly, no one variable or set of variables seems to account for the weakness of cooperation in the two larger regions. In the analysis that follows it is clear that each of the factors with an

impact on cooperation is fundamental to comprehending cooperative dynamics between local governments in these regions. As such, the theoretical framework and the literatures that it was derived from make a vital contribution to the study of cooperation and regional governance. These findings also suggest that there may be another approach better able to account for the observed differences between cases.

Variables/Region	Toronto	Frankfurt	Waterloo	Rhein-Neckar
Executive Autonomy	-	-/+	0	+
Institutional Autonomy	-	-	-	0
Party Politics	n.a.	0	n.a.	0
Power Asymmetry	-	-	-	0
Previous Structures	+	-	n.a.	+
Intervention	-	+	n.a.	n.a.
Shocks	+	0	0	0

(-) negative influence on cooperation; (+) positive influence on cooperation; (0) no influence on cooperation; (n.a.) not applicable

Table 2: The influence of framework variables on cooperation in regional marketing alliances by region

In the Toronto case only the influence of previous structures of governance and of external shocks positively affected the emergence of intermunicipal cooperation. Previously established informal and weakly institutionalized intermunicipal partnerships had an impact on the development of the GTMA. The Greater Toronto Area Economic Development Partnership (GTA-EDP) is an institutionalized but informal meeting of economic development directors and

officials from around the GTA and is a cooperative structure forged as a response to external shocks. As one observer noted: “one of the key driving forces behind the GTA-EDP was the realization that the region was facing global competition from regions that were never a factor before. This meant we needed to work harder and work together” (confidential interview, July 2007). It began in the early 1990s as an unofficial grouping of like-minded officials designed to facilitate information exchange between area municipalities. This partnership remains informal, meeting only sporadically since the late 1990s. The Greater Toronto Mayors and Chairs Committee (GTA-MCC) was established in 1992 as an initiative of Mississauga mayor Hazel McCallion. This group brought together 30 GTA mayors and regional chairs to deal with issues related to regional economic recovery. The sentiment behind the partnership echoed that of the GTA-EDP - GTA municipalities should begin to work together and pool resources for regional competitiveness rather than competing with one another. This group has met on a semi-annual basis and in various forms since 1992. In many ways the GTA-EDP was the informal precursor to the marketing alliance that was eventually established in 1997. The simultaneous creation of the GTA-MCC provided the political support for institutionalizing collaboration in economic development in the form of the GTMA.

Despite these positive factors that clearly contributed to the emergence of intermunicipal cooperation for regional economic development in the Toronto region others are undermining the strength of the partnership. Most notably, factors associated with executive and institutional autonomy, power asymmetry and the legacy of government intervention have negatively influenced attitudes of local actors towards regional collaboration.

Institutional restructuring initiated by the provincial government in 1965 created a second tier of regional municipalities around the metropolitan core (then Metropolitan Toronto) and was a significant watershed in the evolution of intermunicipal relations. While it had the effect of reducing the number of actors involved in regional governance it also dramatically shifted the balance of interests in the region. This occurred as urbanizing ‘edge’ cities that bordered Metro were bundled into regional governments containing primarily rural municipalities and townships. The result is that these edge cities were reoriented under a different set of institutions and incentives. This division became even more acute as Metro amalgamated to become the current (mega) City of Toronto in 1998 and surrounding municipalities consolidated their identities as suburban upper-tier metro regions. This divide, stimulated by the institutional intervention of the provincial government is fundamental to the identity of the region and has proven difficult to overcome. These have been further exacerbated by the actions of leaders in the region and their campaigns to increase local resources and autonomy.

Canadian cities are overly dependent on property taxes to finance local expenditures. Property and related taxes typically make up half of municipal budgets – the Canadian average is 52% (McMillan, 2004, 51). Although competition on property tax rates will be a perpetual irritant in the region, it is no longer a serious barrier to intermunicipal cooperation in other areas. But this competition makes it more difficult for local officials to consider agreements with certain municipalities. Recently the City of Toronto obtained new taxing powers as a result of a campaign led by the mayor to increase the fiscal and jurisdictional autonomy of the central city. While the impact of these powers on cooperation has so far been negligible, these recent developments have reinforced existing divisions in the region based on power dynamics. The central City of Toronto is more economically and politically powerful and is treated differently than the

surrounding municipalities. Even more significant is that the City of Toronto actively perpetuates its ‘difference’ from surrounding municipalities. Toronto’s crusade to secure more fiscal and jurisdictional autonomy and a ‘seat at the table’ in federal and provincial policy is yet another example of this attitude. This campaign, a “New Deal”, for more autonomy and power has been overwhelmingly Toronto-centric. Its proponents contend that the City of Toronto is entitled to more powers and fiscal resources because it is so different from the other cities in the province and the region. Accentuating these differences has distanced the city from its neighbours and, arguably, emphasised the local agenda at the expense of a regional approach.

In the Frankfurt case only government intervention had a direct influence on the emergence of cooperation. Whereas factors such as existing regional governance structures, resource dependence and perceptions of power asymmetry caused observable difficulties to the emergence and intensification of these partnerships.

The regional marketing partnership was created as a result of state legislation that reorganized the two-tier planning structure at the centre of the region. This legislation – the *Ballungsraumgesetz*, 2001 – mandated the creation of regional associations within the planning region in several policy areas. While creation of the partnership was mandated its scale beyond the planning core (participation) and its institutional form were left unspecified. The absence of prior cooperation between the municipalities of the region, even in the central core, suggests that regional marketing activities would not have emerged absent government intervention. But the eventual structure of the organization is a function of independent intermunicipal negotiation. On Table 2 the influence of executive authority is listed as both positive and negative. This is because, on different occasions, executives in the region have both blocked and stimulated cooperation. Most notably, the former mayor of the city of Darmstadt opposed participation in

the regional marketing association (they have since joined under new leadership). However, on other occasions mayors in the region have been very active in promoting a regional agenda by orchestrating regional conferences to discuss collective issues – marketing among them. While these conferences never led to formal cooperation between municipalities on regional marketing their informal activities may have helped to more deeply institutionalize the FRM GmbH.

The history of regional governance in Frankfurt has been, unusually, a barrier to cooperation to the extent that it has tended to reinforce and formalize asymmetries between city, suburban and rural communities. It has been difficult to secure the participation of municipalities beyond the boundaries of the central planning area, which comprises only a fraction of the broader city-region. One of the barrier issues identified by several suburban and rural communities relates to the balance of power between city and suburb/rural community. Rural and less urbanized communities often fail to see the benefit of cooperation and are extremely wary that their interests will be subsumed by those of the central city/cities. With the expansion of regional governance this concern has intensified as the previously divided central cities have been united in the planning region and can potentially better coordinate their efforts through its structures of the planning association and the regional council (confidential interview, October 2006).

Coordination within the planning region has nevertheless been difficult. Part of the problem is that different parties have tended to hold majorities in the planning association and the regional council. In addition, where the planning association gives proportionally more votes (and, by consequence, power) to the central city of Frankfurt, the balance between central urban, suburban, and rural municipalities in the regional council is far more evenly distributed. In this context, the surrounding municipalities outnumber the central cities, which can cause further fragmentation within the council (Blatter, 2005; Falger, 2001). Power asymmetries also stem

from the fragmentation of political influence between the largest cities in the region, Frankfurt, Wiesbaden, Darmstadt, and Mainz. These cities have long been major competing centres of political and economic power (Freitag et al. 2006) as central city, Hessen state capital, southern state planning authority capital, and state capital of Rheinland-Pfalz, respectively. This distribution of political power, at least between the four largest cities, has affected cooperation in several ways. Most obvious has been the exemption of all but Frankfurt from the 2001 legislation. However influential the other four cities are in their own rights, there is a nearly universal perception of those interviewed that any partnership with Frankfurt will result in complete domination of central over peripheral city interests. The influence of these identities and asymmetries have are felt in the tensions that have manifested themselves broadly across the region. The resistance of Wiesbaden (and previously, Darmstadt) to participation in the marketing association is an indication of this wariness. Certainly, in modern times these divisions have been overcome on numerous occasions. But the impact of the past and the perceptions of power dynamics continue to affect attitudes about regional cooperation.

The Waterloo and Rhein-Neckar regions have stronger and better supported regional marketing partnerships, but not necessarily because they have more conducive institutional arrangements. While the Waterloo case has fewer negative influences on cooperation, unlike the rest of the cases there are no positive systemic or intervening variables either.

The only significant negative influences on regional cooperation – that has regardless had very little influence on the strength of the marketing partnership – are related to an asymmetry of power between municipalities based on socioeconomic differences and to concerns about local autonomy. While relations between the municipalities are generally harmonious the city of

Cambridge has always remained a little apart from the other central municipalities of Kitchener and Waterloo. This is partly the legacy of historical economic and social differences between the communities. Cambridge is physically separated from the other two by Highway 401. This physical separation has tended to manifest itself in political distance as well. Cambridge is also culturally divided from Kitchener and Waterloo. The two municipalities on the north side of the highway have German cultural roots, whereas Cambridge has British origins. The municipality of Waterloo with its high tech economy, world renowned university (the University of Waterloo), upper-middle class population and international cache dominates the region while Cambridge is a blue-collar manufacturing center. Perhaps even more significant than these economic and social differences is wariness about a loss of local autonomy. The city of Cambridge was created when three municipalities (Galt, Hespeler and Preston) were amalgamated in 1973. Ever since, Cambridge has been wary of being forcibly incorporated more formally into the Waterloo region. While this hasn't prevented it from participating in regional partnerships, it is widely acknowledged that they are more cautious about sacrificing local autonomy to regional collaboration than the other central municipalities. Most significantly, despite the two negative influences on cooperation, and no positive ones, among the systemic and intervening factors, regional partnerships in Waterloo are among the strongest of all the cases.

Cooperation in the regional marketing partnership in the Rhein-Neckar region is primarily the product of efforts by local actors to construct a broader regional partnership. The MRN GmbH, founded in 2006, is the marketing arm of the Rhein-Neckar metropolitan region – a partnership between local governments and private sector actors to coordinate economic development in the region. This governance structure grew out of parallel movements by different local actors to

reform regional planning structures and to establish the region as one of Germany's "European Metropolitan Regions" in an effort to gain greater international visibility. But the tradition of intermunicipal cooperation that spawned these locally-generated efforts (as opposed to the politically-imposed regional reforms in the three other cases) has deep historical roots. Formal regional (political) cooperation is widely acknowledged to have started in 1951 with the establishment of an intermunicipal working group (the KAG). This group was established largely under the leadership of one man, Hermann Heimerich (former mayor of Mannheim) and became the first cross-border regional association in Germany. Its membership included the cities of Heidelberg, Ludwigshafen, and Mannheim, as well as the counties of Ludwigshafen and Mannheim. Its mandate for intercommunal coordination was relatively expansive but as state policy experts predicted, the association proved inadequate to deal effectively with regional problems and intermunicipal rivalries within the legal form of a GmbH (Schmitz, 2005). In 1970 a regional planning association was created that subsequently established the regional marketing association that was later reformed into the MRN GmbH in the Rhein-Neckar Metropolitan Region reforms of 2005.

What resulted from these appeals for reform is one of the most innovative and unique systems of regional governance in Europe today. The Rhein-Neckar Metropolitan Region was established in 2005 and resulted not only from rethinking the unwieldy political structure of the previous planning region, but also a new approach to *who* should be involved in governing, and how regional activities should be funded. This new structure integrates political, private, education/knowledge and not-for-profit actors formally into the governing process. It is also largely funded from non-governmental sources and allows for leadership and proposals for regional projects to come from any of the participating sectors of society. The metro region is

among the most widely inclusive formal regional governance structures and has come to be regarded as an example of ‘best practices’ to other European Metropolitan regions (Pribs, 2006). In short, this model is likely as close to the principle of associational governance as is possible in a genuinely regional governance structure.

Given its integration into highly participative and innovative regional governance structures it is not surprising that the MRN GmbH is one of the most intense partnerships in this study. It may be tempting to attribute its strength entirely to this long history of regional cooperation – certainly past partnerships have played a role – but it would be a mistake to therefore characterize the region as one lacking conflict or tension. As in the Frankfurt region, the polycentric character and the problem of fragmented identities have contributed to conflicts between the three main cities, between the cities and peripheries that have rapidly become more urbanized and industrialized. Yet these have not prevented institutions of regional governance from emerging and enjoying broad support.

In each case intermunicipal cooperation in some form has occurred despite the difficulties posed by systemic and intervening factors. Each region still experiences tensions and conflict, no matter how strong their regional partnerships. The difference between these cases is not which intermunicipal tensions and competition exists, but the degree to which day-to-day friction and insecurities spill over into intermunicipal relations in other areas. Table 2 reflects how different areas of opportunity and tension impact cooperation in the realm of regional marketing. The relevant factors, and their directions of influence, vary even within regions across different issue areas. The same table presenting results for influences on cooperation in transportation and on cultural collaboration in each of these regions is slightly different. This lack of consistency

further highlights the difficulty of relying on systemic and intervening explanations of regional cooperation. Not only are the relevant factors and their directions of influence difficult to foresee from region to region, but these findings indicate that it is also problematic to discuss intermunicipal cooperation, and by extension the dynamics of regional governance, in the abstract or without reference to a specific policy or issue area. This is not to discredit the explanatory value of the elements of this framework or of these approaches. The preceding analysis demonstrates that systemic and intervening factors are vital to our understanding of the dynamics of intermunicipal cooperative relationships. However, on their own these do not constitute an effective theoretical framework. Something else must better explain these patterns.

Envisioning the region: Civic capital and the strength of intermunicipal partnerships

Civic capital provides an alternative explanation for regional differences in patterns of cooperation. It is based on the idea that civic engagement at the regional scale – even in unrelated and non-political areas – can increase the necessity and legitimacy of municipal engagement at that scale. The decision to engage in intermunicipal cooperation - whatever its form - is based on the political will of local governments. This framework acknowledges that can be shaped by many factors, and so does not dismiss the influence of systemic variables. However, the willingness to engage regional policy may be more closely tied to the strength of the regional *idea*.

Civic capital is the embodiment of this concept. It has been used in a variety of contexts to refer to the civic resources cities can leverage to make broad-minded decisions that will benefit their citizens (Wagner III, 2004, see also Potapchuk and Crocker Jr., 1999). In this paper civic capital is defined as a set of relations that emerges from interorganizational networks tied to a specific region or locality and contributes to the development of a common sense of community based on

a shared identity, set of goals and expectations (Nelles, 2009). Simply stated, it is civic engagement at the regional scale, the outcome of which is collaborative governance. Note that in this definition collaborative governance is not necessarily *politically-driven* governance. Rather, broader and often non-political community action at the city-region scale can both directly and indirectly influence the intensity of cooperative partnerships between local governments.ⁱⁱⁱ

This variant of civic capital consists of networks, leadership and scale, all of which render it distinctive from related social capital, civic culture, policy network and regime theory approaches. Civic capital *is not a network* but it emerges from and requires networks in order to function as a city-regional asset. Networks include formalized associations and informal interpersonal networks operating at any scale within the region – these are often substantively unrelated and can even be competitive. These are the ‘raw material’ of civic capital that exists and can be activated for regional civic engagement. Leadership is a crucial dimension of civic capital in forging links between networks and in promoting regional scalar orientation. These leaders, or civic entrepreneurs, play a role in building bridges between different members of the communities, actors and networks to create more formalized networks of shared identities and interests. Leadership adds the element of agency that is largely missing from alternative approaches and acknowledges a role for individual or organizational actors in catalyzing regional engagement and, therefore, potentially contributing to collaborative governance. Finally, the scalar orientation of leaders and networks is critical to the concept of civic capital. While the precise boundaries of the region vary by issue the key orientation of civic capital is towards an ‘economic community’ – a supra-local functional space of engagement. This builds on the idea that networks function at different scales, but it is not until they are oriented towards a regional space that they are ‘active’ players in regional civic engagement.

Both of the approaches discussed here engage networks to different degrees in their analyses. Rational choice theorists accord a role for policy networks as the foundation of iterated interactions and support for cooperative relationships. The regional governance literature, by contrast, focuses on the impact of social networks. However, networks are rarely central to either approach, and tend to be concentrated on iterated dyadic contact or social network analysis. The concept of civic capital builds on and develops the underlying idea behind this acknowledgement of a role for networks in building partnerships. Namely, that collaborative governance outside the public sector can impact the propensity of local authorities to cooperate and shapes the capacity of these partnerships to govern at the city-region scale.

Civic capital can influence the development and form of intermunicipal partnerships directly or indirectly. Civic associations and groups operating at the regional scale can lobby or otherwise pressure local governments to become regionally active to address issues relevant to them that transcend local boundaries or that require intermunicipal coordination. Indirectly, increasing amounts of activity at the regional scale may necessitate municipal engagement at this scale in order to address issues at the local level. In both cases, the more widespread civic engagement is at the regional scale, the more necessary and legitimate the idea of regional collaboration may become for local actors. As the potential of regional collaboration becomes more obvious it may be easier for municipalities to overcome the persistent frictions associated with metropolitan fragmentation (whatever their sources) for collective ends.

The results of a comparison of civic capital and intensity of intermunicipal cooperation the four cases were consistent with this hypothesis. The Waterloo and Rhein-Neckar regions, home to the most intense partnerships in the study, were also characterized by greater civic capital. The

Toronto and Frankfurt cases, by contrast, exhibited relatively weak civic capital and weak partnerships across all types of regional cooperation studied. These results are presented and discussed in more detail in a recent paper (Nelles, 2010). One weakness of this approach is that while it appears to be effective in explaining differences between regions it cannot account for within-region variation in cooperative intensity across issue areas. However, regions with stronger civic capital will tend to have more intense intermunicipal partnerships than those in which civic engagement is weaker. Further research is necessary both to confirm the broader validity of the observed correlation between civic capital and cooperative intensity and further consider how cooperation varies by issue area. (see Nelles, 2009a for some preliminary analysis of this question).

Conclusion

Cooperation is a fundamental part of governing at any level of analysis. Given the persistence of jurisdiction-spanning policy issues understanding intergovernmental relationships has become even more important to the analysis of policy processes and outcomes. This paper investigates the dynamics of one type of intergovernmental relationship – intermunicipal cooperation – in an effort to contribute to scholarship on regional governance and to push the boundaries of theoretical work on intergovernmental cooperation.

This analysis constructed and tested a theoretical framework of intermunicipal cooperation based on the two dominant streams of research on regional governance and interjurisdictional contracting. Uniting the core elements of these two complementary approaches should produce a more robust explanatory framework. However, both the theoretical implications of the core variables and the empirical findings indicate that this united approach lacks consistency in

explaining patterns and characteristics of intermunicipal cooperation. The systemic and intervening factors proposed by the rational choice and governance approaches are critical to understanding the context within which cooperation emerges and is sustained within specific regions. However, the direction of influence and the strength of partnership cannot be accurately read from institutional factors and intervening events alone. The experiences of the Toronto and Waterloo regions in Canada, and the Frankfurt and Rhein-Neckar regions in Germany in establishing intermunicipal cooperation in the area of regional marketing support this conclusion. The civic capital approach acknowledges that the political will of municipalities to cooperate for regional development can be shaped by many factors, and so does not dismiss the influence of systemic and intervening variables. However, it argues that the degree of civic engagement at the regional scale has a more consistent influence on the intensity of intermunicipal cooperation. This perspective is born out by the empirical cases in this study (further elaborated in Nelles, 2010).

These findings have some significant implications for the study of regional governance and intermunicipal relations as well as broader literature on intergovernmental relationships. First, the comparative test of dominant theoretical approaches reveals what single cases do not – that most variables have the potential to contribute positively or negatively to cooperation. This paper attempts to fill the gap in scholarship on regional governance and development identified by Pierre (2005) and Christopherson (2010) by testing theory using cross-national comparative analysis. Aside from the core thesis this paper also yielded insights about the nature of regional governance that are relevant to the future theoretical development of the field. The finding that the intensities of partnerships – in other words, *the character of governance* – varies from issue to issue suggests that in fragmented city-regions regional governance cannot be treated

monolithically. In the absence of a single multi-purpose regional governance structure the character of intermunicipal relationships may vary across the range of regional partnerships. Consequently, discussing the character of governance in a city-region without reference to specific partnerships is problematic. Where transportation cooperation may be highly institutionalized cooperation on environmental management may not be as strongly supported. This creates a strong argument for precision in future scholarship dealing with regional governance and presents a challenge in selecting cases for subsequent comparative analysis.

The conclusions of this paper also carry implications for research into intergovernmental relations, particularly at scales of engagement between formal levels of government. First, they suggest that institutional and intervening variables, while salient, are not enough to explain intergovernmental relations. Secondly, characterizing city-regions as policy actors – where partnerships behave as political entities – raises an interesting set of questions about how regional partnerships interface with multilevel policy making processes (see Marks & Hooghe, 2004). On numerous occasions scholarship has referred to city-regions as important political actors. For instance, Scott, Agnew, Soja & Storper (2001, 11) argue that city-regions "increasingly function as essential spatial nodes of the global economy and as *distinctive political actors* on the world stage" (emphasis added). Christopherson (2010) notes that regions are often characterized as autonomous actors in competitive games. As previously noted, it is problematic to refer to fragmented regions as actors without reference to a specific issue area or partnership. A region, left undefined in this way, cannot be considered an actor at all. It is a collection of authorities, individuals, networks and entities with no one single will or purpose. Even when discussing a specific partnership the extent to which a region can be characterized as a distinctive, much less significant, *actor on the world stage* varies significantly. Nelles (2009b)

argues that the *capacity* of city-regions to function as political actors outside of their realm of influence depends largely on the strength of intermunicipal partnerships at the regional scale. She contends that the stronger horizontal partnerships are the more likely a city-region (defined in terms of its partnership(s)) will be able to participate in and affect political decisions made in senior levels of government. The role of city-regions in multilevel governance is conditioned by the intensity of regional partnerships. As such, the dynamics of horizontal cooperation are crucial to understanding the influence and behaviour of actors in multilevel governance.

The question of how local governments cooperate for collective ends stands at the intersection of a number of theoretical approaches and empirical puzzles. As a result, research in this area has the potential to make important contributions to scholarship on regional governance and beyond. Future research should concentrate on testing and elaborating the impact of civic capital and investigating the vertical influence of these horizontal relationships. Through continued comparative work more can be learned about how and why we cooperate, even in competitive contexts, and how what we can do to encourage the sentiment of all for one.

Appendix 1:

Cooperative intensity is a measure of the strength of commitment of parties to a partnership. The strength of intermunicipal partnerships was evaluated using three different criteria: participation, institutionalization, and attitudes. A numerical value was assigned to each case based on a combination of participation and institutionalization scores.

Participation reflects the breadth of buy-in into the partnerships. It was determined as a fraction of the number of actual participants divided by the number of potential participants based on total number of actors within the statistically defined city-region: Toronto (1.0), Frankfurt (0.25), Waterloo (1.0), Rhein-Neckar (1.0).

Institutionalization refers to the degree of authority and resources sacrificed by each party to collective control in the interest of long term integration. It is the degree to which the partnership itself has gained autonomy from the participating members (Perkmann, 2003; 2004). This is also related to the degree to which the partnership includes non-political actors, and in what capacity. From this perspective ad hoc

cooperation is much less institutionalized than partnerships that create an independent association. The types of cooperation are ranked and scored from weakest to strongest: no cooperation (0), ad hoc cooperation (1), informal coordination (2), public control (3), public majority (4), consensus decision making (5), non-political majority (6), and non-political control. See Nelles (2009) and Perkmann (2003), for further elaboration of this methodology. The cases are scored: Toronto (5), Frankfurt (4), Waterloo (6), Rhein-Neckar (7).

Attitudes are discussed in the main text. These were evaluated based on the comments of interview subjects and supportive or undermining behaviour by any of the actors (i.e. duplication of partnership functions at the local level). The Toronto and Frankfurt cases were characterized by cynical attitudes (-), and the Waterloo and Rhein-Neckar regions by positive attitudes (+). These evaluations diminish or augment the combined score, respectively.

Final cooperative intensities for each case: Frankfurt 4.23 (-), Toronto 6.0 (-), Waterloo 7.0 (+), and Rhein-Neckar 8.0 (+).

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ⁱ Although definitions continue to be debated, a city-region (or metropolitan region) is a continuous network of urban communities and area of “economic energy” (Jacobs, 1969: 45). It is defined principally in terms of a densely urbanized core surrounded by a territory linked to that center “more than to the core of any adjacent city-region” (Parr, 2005).

ⁱⁱ A more detailed description of how cooperative intensity was classified is included in Appendix 1.

ⁱⁱⁱ Does arguing that civic capital is a key determinant of cooperative intensity amount to saying that the degree of cooperation in a region determines the degree of cooperation between municipalities (i.e. the argument proves itself)? While on the surface it seems as though it does, this is a mischaracterization of the concept of civic capital. Civic capital consists of networks of *interaction*, not *cooperation*. While there certainly can be cooperation within and between regional networks, civic capital is not necessarily cooperative. Indeed, interactions can occur on many levels and be competitive or even conflictual (to a degree). The point is that civic capital emerges as an unintended consequence of self-serving actions that involve interaction between individuals or groups within a community. It is the extent to which connections are being forged and then these typically loose and informal networks can be harnessed or leveraged by civic entrepreneurs to mobilize support for collaborative solutions that underpins this central argument.



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